

the return of RoboCop

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Last time it was just muggers, thieves and murderers - this time *RoboCop* has drug dealers and drug-addicted metal monsters to deal with as well. Peter Weller, the man inside RoboCop's stainless steel suit certainly had reservations about returning when the villains were so, well, villainous.

"I had reservations about doing *RoboCop 2*," Weller confessed. "It wasn't 'Gee, do I want to be connected with *RoboCop* all my life?' - which I don't - but 'Do I want to go through what it takes to develop, express and delineate a character inside of a suit - all the training it takes, all the preparation, and on and on, for months!' The blue screen shots afterwards, and wouldn't I rather be in the Caribbean doing a 10-week movie, making my money and splitting?"

One of the reasons that Weller agreed to reprise his character in the second film was that the script enabled him to extend the personality of the stainless steel/human cop. "I didn't feel quite complete with the character. I knew there was something else to say with it."

In the end, the long hours in the RoboCop suit were easier for Weller than they were in *RoboCop 1*. A newly designed suit helped the process with the new suit, although still 35 pounds in weight, being less complicated. "The preparation was easier for this one, maybe I'm just used to it. Last time, because the suit was so much more complicated and took so long to put on, and also, because of all the physical training I was doing, I was working an 18-hour day, minimum - sometimes a 20-hour day, there were about 25 x 20-hour days. I was on a special diet, doing this biological time clock process, all this hocus-pocus to keep going. When I got a day off, it really wasn't enough time to relax. I found that my body would slow down just enough to get anxious, like withdrawals, and then by Sunday, I was itching to get back to work. It was almost like bio-rhythm shock. I couldn't ever really relax."

"I was happiest and most comfortable when I was in the suit. This time, it was a little bit more civilized. They worked the shit out of me for two days, and I'm actually training harder - doing a lot of cross-training - running and swimming, running and lifting weights six days a week, except this time I knew what the momentum of the thing was. When the free days came, it was like a godsend!"

If the keep in shape training wasn't enough, Weller also had to recreate the almost expressionless cyborg again. "I approached the part as a guy who had amnesia. What am I going to do - am I going to personalize a computer? I can't. There's no way we can pretend we're computers. I would come out like somebody indicating that, but to me, the story is a guy who had his memory taken away - it's as simple as that!"

RoboCop doesn't know what he is. He's just a guy who wakes up, and this is what he is. If he has any consciousness at all, it's human."

One of the biggest differences between the two films is the change in director. Paul Verhoeven was responsible for the original but veteran director Irv Kershner has taken over the helm in the sequel. Weller believes nothing has been lost in this change, commenting that each director brought just the right approach to the film.

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"We knew what we were doing more on the second one; the preliminary problems were nailed down. The logistics were out of the way and Kershner is a much more 'even' kind of guy. He's not the startling presence that Paul is on the set, but he's a journeyman director, and the sequel was a bigger movie. It needed more attention to detail and it needed a more demure set. I think if we entailed the passion and the madness on this one that we had on the first one, we would have been all over the place." ✎



